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## GREGOIRE'S SKETCH OF ANGELO SOLIMANN

The historical setting of this sketch is the life of the author himself. Abbé Grégoire was born in 1750 and died in 1831. He was educated at the Jesuit College at Nancy. He then became Curé and teacher at the Jesuit school at Pont-a-Mousson. In this position he had the opportunity to apply himself to study and soon attained some distinction as a scholar. In 1783 he was crowned by the Academy of Nancy for his *Éloge de La poésie* and in 1788 by that of Metz for an *Essai sur la Régénération physique et morale des Juifs*. Throughout his career he exhibited evidences of a breadth of mind and interest in the man far down. When the French Revolution broke out, therefore, he easily became a factor in the upheaval, but endeavored always to restrain the people from fury and vandalism. In 1789, he was elected by the clergy of the bailliage of Nancy to the States-General, where he coöperated with the group of deputies of Jansenist or Gallican sympathies.

He was among the first of the clergy to join the third estate and contributed largely to the union of the three orders. He took an active part in the abolition of the privileges of the nobles of the church and under the new constitution he was one of the first to take oath. In taking this stand, however, he lost the support of most of his fellow churchmen, who, unlike Abbé Grégoire, did not think that the Catholic religion is reconcilable with modern conceptions of political liberty. Because of the changing fortunes of the revolutionists, therefore, Abbé Grégoire finally found himself often deserted and sometimes almost reduced to poverty.

To the end of his career, however, he maintained his attitude of benevolence toward the oppressed. Differing widely from most white men, who although willing to take

radical measures to make democracy safe for themselves, are reluctant to extend its benefits to those of color, Abbé Grégoire earnestly labored in the Constituent Assembly to bring about the emancipation of the Negroes in the French colonies. His interest in persons of African blood, moreover, was not restricted to the mere abolition of slavery because it was a stain on the character of the whites but he endeavored also to elevate the slaves to the full status of citizenship. It was largely through his efforts that men of color in the French colonies were soon after their emancipation admitted to the same civil and political rights as the whites in those dependencies.

He made an effort, moreover, to influence public opinion in behalf of the Negroes in other lands. Having read in Jefferson's *Notes on Virginia* his references to the so-called inferiority of the Negroes, Grégoire sent him a copy of his *De la Littérature des Nègres*. Replying to the communication transmitting this publication Jefferson expressed himself in diplomatic and flattering terms, apparently indicating that he had expressed the opinion of inferiority with much hesitation and that the argument to establish the doctrine was after all rather weak. Writing a few days later to Joel Barlow, Jefferson no doubt expressed his real opinion as to what he thought of the inferiority of the Negro and Grégoire's evidences to the contrary. The pamphlet no doubt had some effect for, "As to Bishop Grégoire," says he, "I wrote him a very soft answer. It was impossible for doubt to have been more tenderly or hesitatingly expressed than there was in the *Notes on Virginia* and nothing was or is further from my intentions than to enlist myself as the champion of a fixed opinion where I have only expressed a doubt."

In later years, however, Abbé Grégoire's *De la Littérature des Nègres* fell into the hands of a more sympathetic man. This was D. B. Walden of Brooklyn, New York, then secretary to the legation at Paris. Interested in the abolition of the slave trade and the welfare of the blacks, Walden

translated Grégoire's *De la Litterature des Nègres*, that friends of the race unacquainted with the French language might have additional information as to what the Negro had done to demonstrate that the race is not intellectually inferior to others. This translation, however, is unfortunate because of the numerous faults throughout the work and largely on account of its omissions. Exactly why the translator did not desire to bring before the American public all of the facts set forth in this book has never been exactly cleared up. It has been said, however, that the facts omitted were too favorable to the Negro race to be received by the American public at that time. The whole work should be translated as soon as some scholar can direct his attention to it, but, in the absence of such an effort, I am submitting herewith a translation of the most striking omission, chapter five, which gives an interesting sketch of the career of Angelo Solimann.

#### BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF THE NEGRO ANGELO SOLIMANN

Although Angelo Solimann has published nothing<sup>1</sup> he deserves, because of his extensive learning and still more by the morality and excellence of his character, one of the first places among the Negroes who have distinguished themselves by a high degree of culture.

He was the son of an African prince. The country subject to the latter's domination was called Gangusilang; the family, Magni-Famori. Besides the little Mmadi-Make (this was Angelo's name

<sup>1</sup> I discharge a duty in disclosing to the public the names of the persons to whom I am indebted for the biography of this estimable African, concerning whom Dr. Gall was the first to speak to me. Upon the request of my fellow-citizens, D'Hautefort, attaché to the embassy, and Dudon, First Secretary to the French legation in Austria, they hastened to satisfy my curiosity. Two estimable ladies of Vienna, Mme. Stief and Mme. Pieler, worked at it with great zeal. All the details furnished by the defunct Angelo's friends were carefully collected. From this material has been written the interesting account which follows. In the French translation it loses in delicacy of style, for Mme. Pieler, who wrote it down in German, possesses the rare talent of writing equally well in prose and in poetry. I take great pleasure in expressing to these kind persons my just gratitude.

in his native country) his parents had another younger child, a daughter. He remembered with what respect his father, surrounded by a large number of servants, was treated; he had, like every prince's child of that country, certain marks imprinted on his two legs, and for a long time he hoped that he would be sought for, and recognized by these marks.

Even in his old age, the memories of his childhood, of his first practice in shooting arrows, in which he surpassed his comrades, the memory of the simple customs and the beautiful blue sky of his native country, often recurred to his mind with a pleasure not unmixed with sorrow. He could not sing, without being profoundly affected, those songs of his native land which his good memory had very well conserved.

It appears, from Angelo's reminiscences, that his tribe already had some civilization. His father possessed many elephants, and even some horses which were rare in those countries; money was unknown, but trade by barter was carried on regularly and by auction. Stars were worshipped; circumcision was usual. Two white families lived in the country.

Some writers who have published accounts of their voyages, speak of the perpetual wars between some tribes of Africa, of which the purpose was sometimes vengeance or robbery, sometimes the most ignominious kind of avarice, because the victor took the prisoners to the nearest slave market in order to sell them to the whites. One day as the boy, then seven years old, was standing at the side of his mother who was nursing his sister, a war of this kind of a danger that his father did not suspect broke out against the tribe of Mmadi-Makéé. Suddenly there were heard the frightful clashing of arms and howlings of the wounded. Mmadi-Maké's grandfather, struck by fear, ran into the cabin crying: "There is the enemy." Fatuma, frightened, arose. The father hastily sought his weapon; and the little boy, terrified, ran away as quickly as an arrow. His mother called loudly: "Where are you going Mmadi-Maké?" The child answered: "Wherever God wishes me to go." In his old age he often reflected upon the great significance of these words. When he was out of the cabin, he looked back and saw his mother and many of his father's men fall under the blows of the enemy. He cowered down with another boy under a tree. Struck with fear, he covered his eyes with his hands. The fight continued. The enemy, believing themselves

already victorious, seized him, and held him aloft as a sign of joy. At this sight, the fellow-countrymen of Mmadi-Maké cheered their forces and rallied to save the son of their king. The fighting began again, and while it lasted the boy was still raised aloft. Finally the enemies were conquerors and he was positively their prize. His master exchanged him for a fine black horse, which another Negro gave him, and the child was taken to the place of embarkation. There he found many of his fellow-countrymen, all like himself, prisoners, all condemned to slavery. With sorrow they recognized him, but they could do nothing for him. They were even forbidden to speak to him.

When the prisoners, being taken on small boats, reached the seashore, Mmadi-Maké saw with surprise several large vessels, on one of which he was received with his third master. He supposed that it was a Spanish vessel. After suffering a storm, they landed on a coast, and the master promised the child that he would take him to his mother. The latter, delighted, quickly saw his hope disappear, finding instead of his mother, his master's wife, who, moreover, received him very well, kissed him and treated him with much kindness. Her husband named him Andrew, and directed him to take the camels to the pasture, and watch them.

It is impossible to say of what nationality this man was, or how long Angelo, who has now been dead twelve years, lived at his home. This short memoir has been written down recently from the story of his friends. But it is known that after a reasonably long stay, his master announced to him his intention of transporting him to a country where he would be better off. Mmadi-Maké was greatly pleased with this. His mistress parted from him with regret. They embarked and arrived at Messina, where he was conducted to the home of a wealthy lady, who, it appeared, was expecting to receive him. She treated him kindly, gave him an instructor to teach him the language of the country, which he learned with ease. His good nature won for him the friendship of the numerous servants, among whom he singled out a Negress, named Angelina, because of her gentleness, and her kindly attitude towards him. He became dangerously ill; the Marchioness, his mistress, gave him all the care of a mother, even to the point of sitting up with him part of the night. The most skillful physicians were called in and his bed was surrounded by a crowd of persons who awaited his orders. The Marchioness had long wished that he

would be baptized. After repeated refusals, one day, during his convalescence, he himself asked for baptism. His mistress, very much delighted, ordered the most elaborate preparations. In a parlor there was erected over a stately bed a canopy richly embroidered. The entire family and all the friends of the house were present. Mmadi-Maké, lying on this bed, was asked concerning the name he desired to have. Because of gratitude and his friendship for the Negress Angelina, he wished to be named Angelo. His desire was granted, and as a family name he was given that of Solimann. He was accustomed to celebrate piously the day of his entrance into Christianity, the eleventh of September, as though it were his birthday.

His goodness, his kindness, and his sense of justice made him dear to every one. The Prince Lobkowitz, then in Sicily in the capacity of imperial general, frequented the house where this child lived. He experienced for him such an affection that he made the most earnest entreaties that he be given to him. Because of her affection for Angelo, the Marchioness could not easily grant his request. She finally yielded to the considerations of advantage and prudence which impelled her to make this gift to the general. How she wept when she parted with the little Negro who entered with repugnance the service of a new master.

The duties of the prince did not permit a long stay in this country. He loved Angelo, but his manner of life and perhaps the spirit of the time caused him to give very little attention to his education. Angelo became wild and ill-tempered. He passed his days in idleness, and children's sports. An old steward of the prince, realizing his good heart and excellent qualities, in spite of his thoughtlessness, procured for him a teacher, under whom Angelo learned in seventeen days to write German. The tender affection of the child, and his rapid progress in all the branches of instruction, repaid the good old man for his trouble.

Thus Angelo grew up in the house of the prince. He accompanied him on all his tours, and shared with him the perils of war. He fought side by side with his master, whom one day he carried wounded, on his shoulders, from the field of battle. Angelo distinguished himself on these occasions, not only as a servant and faithful friend, but also as an intrepid warrior, as an experienced officer, especially in tactics, although he never had military rank. The field marshal Lasey, who esteemed him highly, gave, before a group of officers, a most creditable eulogy upon his bravery, pre-

sented him with a splendid Turkish sabre, and offered him the command of a company, which he refused.

His master died. By his will he left Angelo to the Prince Wenceslas de Lichtenstein, who for a long time, had desired to have him. This man asked Angelo if he were satisfied with this arrangement and if he were willing to come to his home. To this Angelo agreed, and made the preparations for the change necessary in his manner of living. In the meanwhile, Emperor Francis I called him to him, and made the same offer, with very flattering terms. But the word of Angelo was sacred. He remained at the home of Prince Lichtenstein. Here, as at the home of General Lobkowitz, the tutelar genius of unhappy persons, he was accustomed to convey to the prince the requests of those who wished to obtain some favor. His pockets were always filled with notes and petitions. Never being able or willing to ask favors for himself, he fulfilled with equal zeal and success this duty in favor of others.

Angelo followed his master on his journeys, and to Frankfort, at the time of the coronation of Emperor Joseph, as king of the Romans. One day, at the instigation of his prince, he tried his luck at chance and won twenty thousand florins. He played another game with his opponents, who again lost twenty-four thousand florins; in playing the second game, Angelo knew how to arrange the play so finely that the loser regained the last amount. This fine trait of Angelo won for him admiration, and gained for him numerous congratulations. The transient favor of chance did not dazzle him; on the contrary, apprehending his fickleness, he never again ventured any big sum. He amused himself with chess and had the reputation of being one of the best players of this game of his time.

At the age of ——— he married a widow, Madame de Christiani, née Kellerman, of Belgium origin. The prince did not know of this marriage. Perhaps Angelo had reasons for concealing it. A later event has justified his silence. The Emperor Joseph II, who had a lively interest in everything concerning Angelo and who, as a mark of distinction, even walked arm in arm with him, made known to Prince Lichtenstein one day, without foreseeing the consequences, Angelo's secret. The latter called Angelo, and questioned him? Angelo admitted his marriage. The prince announced that he would banish him from his house, and erase his name from his will. He had intended to give him some diamonds



of considerable value, with which Angelo was accustomed to being decked when he followed his master on festive days.

Angelo, who had asked favors so often for others, did not say one word for himself. He left the palace to live in a distant suburb, in a small house bought a long time before, and transferred to his wife. He lived with her in this retreat, enjoying domestic happiness. The most careful education of his only daughter, Madame the Baroness of Hoüchters-leöen, who is no longer living, the cultivation of his garden, the social intercourse of several learned and estimable men, were his occupations and his pleasures.

About two years after the death of Prince Wenceslas of Lichtenstein, his nephew and heir, the Prince Francis, saw Angelo in the street. He ordered his carriage to be stopped, had him enter it, and told him that, being convinced of his innocence, he was resolved to make amends for the injustice of his uncle. Consequently he assigned to Angelo an income revertible after his death to Madam Solimann. The only thing which the prince asked of Angelo was to supervise the education of his son, Louis of Lichtenstein.

Angelo fulfilled punctiliously the duties of his new vocation, and he went daily to the prince's home, in order to watch over the pupil recommended to his care. The Prince, seeing that the long walk might be difficult for Angelo, especially in inclement weather, offered him a residence. There again was Angelo settled, for the second time, in the Lichtenstein palace; but he took with him his family. He lived there in retreat as before in the company of some friends, in that of scholars, and devoted to "belles lettres" which he constantly cultivated with zeal. His favorite study was history. His excellent memory aided him greatly. He could cite the names, dates, year of birth of all illustrious persons, and noteworthy events.

His wife, who for a long time had been declining, was kept alive several years longer, through the tender care of a husband who lavished upon her all the aid of science; but finally she died. From that time on Angelo made several changes in his household. He no longer invited friends to dine with him. He never drank anything except water as an example for his daughter, whose education, then finished, was entirely his work. Perhaps, also, he wished, by a strict economy to make sure the fortune of this only daughter.

Angelo, esteemed and loved everywhere, still did much traveling at an advanced age, sometimes in the interests of others, some-

times to attend to his own affairs. People have recalled his acts of kindness, and the favors that he had shown. Circumstances having taken him to Milan, the late Archduke Ferdinand, who was governor there, overwhelmed him with demonstrations of friendship.

He enjoyed, to the end of his career, a robust constitution; his appearance showed hardly any signs of old age, which caused several mistakes and friendly disputes; for often people who had not seen him for twenty or thirty years, mistook him for his son, and treated him according to this error.

Suffering a stroke of apoplexy in the street, at the age of seventy-five, people hastened to give him succor which was useless. He died, November 21, 1796, mourned by all his friends, who cannot think of him without emotion, and without tears. The esteem of all men of consequence has followed him to the tomb.

Angelo was of medium stature, slender and well proportioned. The regularity of his features and the nobleness of his carriage, form, by their beauty, a contrast with the unfavorable opinion generally held concerning the Negro physiognomy. An unusual suppleness in all bodily exercises gave to his carriage and to his movements grace and ease. Combining with all the fineness of virtue a good judgment, ennobled by extensive and thorough knowledge, he knew six languages, Italian, French, German, Latin, Bohemian, and English, and besides spoke especially the first three fluently.

Like all his fellow countrymen, he was born with an impetuous temper. His unchangeable calmness and good nature were consequently so much the more admirable, as they were the result of hard fighting and many victories won over himself. He never allowed, even when someone had irritated him, an improper expression to escape his lips. Angelo was pious without being superstitious. He carefully observed all religious rites, not believing that it was beneath him to give in this way an example to his family. His word and decisions, to which he had come after careful consideration, were unchangeable, and nothing could swerve him from his intention. He always wore the costume of his country. This was a kind of very simple garment in Turkish fashion almost always of dazzling whiteness, which accentuated to advantage the black and shining color of his skin. His picture, engraved at Augsburg, is found in the art gallery of Lichtenstein.

F. HARRISON HOUGH.